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# DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY U. S. COAST GUARD

#### STATEMENT OF

## VADM THAD ALLEN CHIEF OF STAFF

#### ON THE

#### ROLE OF THE COAST GUARD IN BORDER SECURITY

### **BEFORE THE**

**COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS** 

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

**U.S. SENATE** 

**APRIL 6, 2006** 

#### Introduction

Good morning Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee. It is a pleasure to be here today to discuss the Coast Guard's role in border security. Senator Byrd, on behalf of the entire Coast Guard, please accept our sincere condolences on the recent loss of your wife.

Thanks in great part to the attention of this committee and the particular interests of Chairman Gregg and Senator Byrd, securing our borders has become a top priority initiative. This hearing is a testament to the continued priority this committee places on border security, and a recognition of the reality that the Coast Guard is at the nexus of port and border security.

## Effective border security depends on maritime security

Securing the borders of the United States is a multifaceted challenge ranging from the remote deserts of Arizona and the rugged hills of Montana to the vast expanse of ocean off American shores. As aggressive steps are taken undertaken to secure the land border, smugglers and migrants – and potentially terrorists – will undoubtedly look for other points of entry to exploit. Effective border security requires an integrated approach that crosses land, air and maritime domains, lest one door be closed only to open another.

The United States is intrinsically connected to and immensely reliant on the oceans. The maritime domain under U.S. jurisdiction is larger than its total landmass, and provides the shipping lanes, fisheries and energy resources that sustain our nation. The maritime domain is also an avenue for those wishing to smuggle people and illicit drugs into our communities – and an avenue that could be exploited as a means to smuggle weapons of mass destruction and/or terrorists into our country. In 2005 alone, the Coast Guard:

- Intercepted 9,500 undocumented migrants attempting to enter the United States illegally by sea, a 100 percent increase over 2001; and
- Prevented more than 338,000 pounds of cocaine (an all-time maritime record) and more than 10,000 pounds marijuana from reaching the United States.

The U.S. maritime domain is unique in its scope and diversity. With more than 350 commercial ports and 95,000 miles of coastline (including bays, lakes and rivers), the challenge in distinguishing between legitimate and illicit activity is complex to say the least. We are bounded by the oceans but we're not protected by them. There is no single fence, sensor or screening technology adequate to ensure maritime safety and security. The maritime domain is dynamic and requires an integrated, layered approach to security. This entails efforts across all operating areas, from ports and coastal areas to extended offshore operations, and must include extensive domestic and international partnerships.

The thick blue line in figure 1 shows the expanse of our maritime borders.



Figure 1

# The Coast Guard is the lead federal agency for securing our maritime border

The nation has built a Coast Guard able to operate successfully in this complex and unique environment. Single-purpose agencies such as the Revenue Cutter Service, the Lifesaving Service, and the Lighthouse Service have been integrated over the last century into the uniquely effective and efficient Service we are today. The Coast Guard you exercise – the Coast Guard that we have collectively built – has a relatively straightforward purpose: exercise authorities and deploy capability to guarantee the safety and security of the U.S. maritime domain. That is who we are, what we are charged to do, and represents the core character of the Service. We are military, multimission and maritime.

#### **Maritime risks**

Secretary Chertoff has emphasized that the three variables of threat, vulnerability and consequence serve as the appropriate model for assessing risk and deciding on the protective measures we undertake as a nation. I agree and in terms of threat, vulnerability, and consequence, the maritime realm presents unique challenges.

• Threat: While the 9/11 Commission noted the continuing threat against our aviation system, it also stated that "opportunities to do harm are as great, or greater, in maritime or surface transportation." From smuggling to piracy, suicide attacks to the threat of weapons of mass destruction, the threats are many and varied. Much of the current public discourse focuses on container security, which is appropriate given the recent headlines. However, a container is only as secure as the ship and crew that carries it. In fact, the greatest observed maritime threat remains smuggling. There are a wide variety of maritime threat scenarios and vectors beyond the confines of a single container. For example, a formal Coast Guard risk assessment revealed that small boats actually pose a higher risk. These small boats, traditionally used to smuggle drugs and migrants, can also be used to carry out Cole-type attacks on U.S. interests, bring in weapons of mass destruction (and other types of weapons) and/or to sneak terrorists into our communities.

- <u>Vulnerability</u>: Our nation is vulnerable to seaborne infiltration. There are dozens of nations in Central and South America and the Caribbean close enough that maritime trafficking of migrants, drugs, or other illegal commodities remains a constant threat. As on land, we know that there are numerous professional migrant smuggling rings that operate in the maritime realm. Some operate in the Caribbean or from nations further south such as Ecuador. Meanwhile, Haiti and the Dominican Republic are the launching point for thousands of illegal migrants each year; and Cuba, one of the designated State Sponsors of Terrorism, sits just south of the Florida Keys. There are no highways or deserts to cross between Cuba and the United States only 90 miles of ocean, easily crossed in two hours or less in a high-powered speedboat and we see hundreds of such smuggling attempts every year. The proximity of U.S. population centers to the maritime domain and the diversity of maritime users present significant and wide ranging vulnerabilities. Effectively addressing these vulnerabilities requires maritime strategies that detect and defeat threats as far from the U.S. shores as possible.
- Consequence: Contributing nearly \$750 billion to the U.S. gross domestic product annually and handling 95 percent of all overseas trade each year the value of the U.S. marine transportation system and the consequence of any significant attack cannot be overstated. Neither can the range of maritime terrorist attack scenarios we can envision whether it's the recurring consequence of migrant and drug smuggling, to more severe events such as attacks on commercial vessels or ports, the infiltration of terrorists or their sympathizers into our nation, or in the worst case, delivery of weapons of mass destruction into our communities. The economic consequences to any disruption would be severe. A recent Congressional Budget Office (CBO) study estimated the economic consequences (to Gross Domestic Product (GDP)) of a one-week shutdown of a *single* major port to be as much as \$150 million per day.

The Coast Guard has put in place a variety of systems to methodically assess each of these components of risk such that we can target resources appropriately. It is also these broad risks and the complexity of the global maritime environment that led the President to issue in September 2005 the *National Strategy for Maritime Security* (NSMS). This strategy is unprecedented in its dedicated focus on the maritime domain and the necessity for its global security. The NSMS addresses the full range of maritime threats and is not limited to terrorism.

# Securing the Maritime Border Now and in the Future

Leveraging its longstanding partnerships and unique maritime authorities and capabilities, the Coast Guard has significantly enhanced nationwide maritime security. Significant challenges remain and much more work needs to be done, but we're focused on the right priorities:

• We are more aware. Before 9/11, we had no mandatory ship-tracking requirement for large commercial vessels. Since 9/11, vessel reporting requirements have been expanded, we have forged an international agreement to accelerate the requirement for Automatic Identification System (AIS) capability, which provides real-time information on vessel positions and movements, and established a National Vessel Movement Center to coordinate the screening of vessel and crew arrival information. The Coast Guard has also become an integrated member of the intelligence community - strengthening our organic capability with Maritime Intelligence Fusion Centers and Field Intelligence Support Teams, while also strengthening our partnership with the Office of Naval Intelligence.

- We have implemented a comprehensive domestic and international security regime. Before 9/11 we had no formal international or domestic maritime security regime for ports, port facilities, and ships with the exception of cruise ships. Partnering with maritime stakeholders, we now have both a comprehensive domestic security regime and an international security convention in place.
- We have a more effective operational presence. Before 9/11 we were shorthanded and could not have met today's mission requirements without our Reserves and Auxiliary. Since 9/11 we have:
  - Established 13 Maritime Safety and Security Teams;
  - Deployed more than 80 new small boats (RB-S) and boat crews;
  - Provided radiation detection capabilities to our boarding teams; and
  - Acquired 15 Coastal Patrol Boats and accepted transfer of five Navy 170-foot Patrol Crafts to increase operational presence in our ports.

Our overarching strategy is to, through a layered security architecture, "push out our borders." Our unambiguous goal is to meet threats far offshore in order to avoid hostile persons, vessels or cargoes entering our ports or coastal regions. In the maritime realm, a goal line defense is no defense at all. This principle is exemplified daily as we intercept drug and migrant laden vessels as far away as the Galapagos Islands and last spring, when Coast Guard units, working with an interagency team, intercepted a suspect cargo ship over 900 miles east of Cape Hatteras, NC. In this case, the threat was determined to be unfounded but our ability to push the borders out is an essential element in protecting our homeland.

The Coast Guard faces challenges in the maritime domain similar to the Border Patrol in securing the land border – with a limited set of resources, locate amid vast geographic areas and huge amounts of legitimate activity those seeking to do us harm. The phrase "finding a needle in a haystack" is an apt description of the challenge. The foundation of our maritime strategy relies on three key priorities:

- Achieve Maritime Domain Awareness;
- Establish and Lead a Maritime Security Regime; and
- Deploy effective and integrated operational capability.

These are not stand-alone goals, but rather part of an active system of layered maritime security. For example, the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) led to the establishment of domestic and international AIS carriage requirements for certain commercial vessels. But without investment in systems to collect, analyze and disseminate the AIS signals we lose the opportunity to assess threats early. Similarly, the detection, identification and interdiction of small vessels (that certainly do not advertise their position) used by smugglers throughout the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific requires persistent surveillance capabilities. In the end, Coast Guard assets must be capable of mounting a dependable response to identified threats lest we have information but not the capability to act. Put another way, having airborne sensors identify and track suspicious vessels is of little use without surface forces able to respond.

Coast Guard assets and systems are required to operate across a diverse operating area including within our ports, in the littoral region, and far offshore. Thanks to the strong support of the administration, Congress and this Committee in particular, a number of initiatives are underway to transform Coast Guard capabilities. Several are worth highlighting as each will have a broad and substantial influence on our ability to mitigate current and future maritime risks.

**Integrated Deepwater System**. The centerpiece of the Coast Guard's future capability is the Integrated Deepwater System, recently revised to a 25-year \$24 billion acquisition program and reflective of post-9/11 mission requirements. The Integrated Deepwater System was designed to secure the nation's maritime borders just as the newly-announced Secure Border Initiative will help deliver a system to secure the land borders. In the end, they will complement each other in delivering a comprehensive system of border security.

A critical dimension of the Deepwater Program's assets and systems is their ability to fill operational gaps. As was addressed in the Coast Guard's operational gap analysis report submitted to Congress with the fiscal year 2007 budget request, the action plan to deliver the operational capabilities and requirements specified in the revised Deepwater implementation plan is a 25-year effort. This long-term plan requires a fine balance between removing legacy assets from service to realize system cost savings while maintaining sufficient system capacity so as to not exacerbate current operational gaps. The plan results in modest near-term operational hour shortfalls followed by the steep, long-term gains in operational capability and capacity as new Deepwater assets enter service in greater numbers.

• For example, figure 2 shows the current gap in patrol boat hours; it is affected most adversely by the difficulties encountered in the 123-foot conversion program. Unfortunately, the conversion of our legacy 110-foot patrol boats has not provided the bridge to the future Fast Response Cutter (FRC) that we had hoped. As a result, we have taken steps to advance the design and construction of the FRC order to restore this critical capacity as quickly as possible.

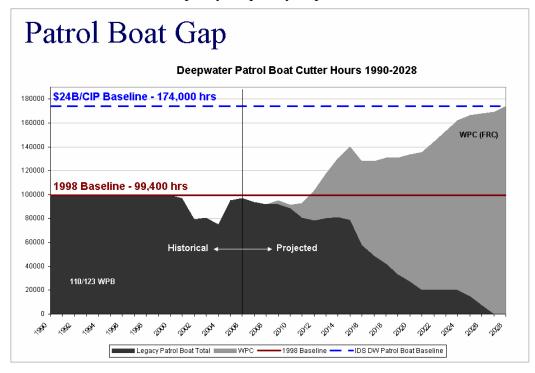
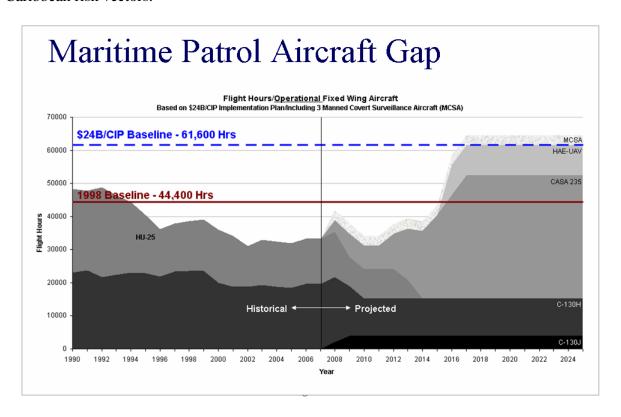


Figure 2

Similarly, figure 3 shows the pre-existing Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) gap. The revised
Deepwater implementation plan strives to mitigate this gap by keeping more legacy C-130H aircraft
in service longer while adding new Maritime Patrol Aircraft (CASA-235's) to the Coast Guard air
fleet. Additionally, the Coast Guard and Customs and Border Patrol are working together to fill the
gap with a manned covert surveillance aircraft projected to serve as a surveillance platform in the
Caribbean risk vectors.



The Coast Guard will continue to mitigate operational gaps in the near term, while striving for the future Deepwater fleet that will exceed current legacy capability and capacity. The requirements and capabilities reflected in the post-9/11 revised Deepwater implementation plan will be delivered methodically and prudently over the next 25 years.

Just as important as building capacity to fill the operational gaps cited above is ensuring these assets are able to serve as the "eyes and ears" to allow the nation to see, hear and communicate activity occurring within the maritime domain. The Coast Guard's sustained presence along our maritime borders is unique. More capable Deepwater assets, linked to each other and multiple agencies through Deepwater's net-centric command-and-control system will significantly improve information sharing, collaboration, and interoperability in the maritime domain.

Vessel tracking. Securing our vast maritime borders requires improved awareness of the people, vessels and cargo approaching and moving throughout U.S. ports, coasts and inland waterways. The most pressing challenges we now face involve tracking the vast population of vessels operating in and around the approaches to the United States, and detecting and intercepting the small vessels used for migrant and drug smuggling, which can easily be used by terrorists seeking to do us harm. It is against this threat that we need to continually improve, and we are taking significant steps in the right direction. The Coast Guard needs as much information as possible about vessels operating in the maritime domain,

particularly their location and identity, in order to enable effective and timely decisions and identify friend from foe. In support of this requirement, the Coast Guard has:

- Established the Automatic Identification System (AIS) to provide continuous, real-time information on the identity, location, speed and course of vessels in ports that are equipped with AIS receivers. AIS is currently operational in several major U.S. ports, and the Coast Guard's Nationwide Automatic Identification (NAIS) project will expand AIS capabilities to ports nationwide; and
- Initiated development of a long-range vessel tracking system to receive information on vessels beyond the scope of the existing and planned AIS system. Long-range vessel tracking systems are designed to extend tracking capabilities up to 2000 nautical miles offshore.

**Personnel security and credentialing**. The Coast Guard has made a number of critical improvements to the security and vetting procedures surrounding the issuance of merchant mariner documents. This effort has been bolstered with funding provided in fiscal year 2006 to restructure the merchant mariner licensing program by centralizing security and vetting functions in a new, enhanced National Maritime Center. Future efforts will focus on:

- Working on an accelerated schedule with the Transportation Security Administration to draft rules on implementing the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC). Enrollment in TWIC is expected to begin on September 1, 2006; and
- Continuing to explore technologies that will allow Coast Guard boarding teams to access existing databases and information sources such as US VISIT.

**Maritime C4ISR Enhancement**. Existing Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems and operational concepts must be reoriented and integrated with current and emerging sensor capabilities and applicable procedures. Similar to the nation's air space security regime, the maritime security regime must integrate existing C4ISR systems with new technologies and national command-and-control systems and processes. For example:

- The Common Operating Picture (COP) and corresponding Command Intelligence Picture (CIP) must continue to grow and expand to federal, state, and local agencies with maritime interests and responsibilities. The COP provides a shared display of friendly, enemy/suspect and neutral tracks on a map with applicable geographically referenced overlays and data enhancements. The COP is also a central element of the Deepwater solution tying Deepwater assets and operational commanders together with dynamic, real-time maritime domain information. This link is essential to ensure effective command and control of all available Coast Guard assets responding to a myriad of border security threats.
- An expansive and interoperable communications network is critical for maritime security operations
  and safety of life at sea. In the coastal environment, the Coast Guard's Rescue 21 system will
  provide the United States with an advanced maritime distress and response communications system
  that bridges interoperability gaps, saves lives and improves maritime security.
- Hurricanes Katrina and Rita demonstrated the need for robust and resilient port and coastal command and control. Through test-beds at command centers in Miami, FL, Charleston, SC and elsewhere; and joint harbor operations centers established with the U.S Navy in Hampton Roads,

VA, and San Diego, CA; the power of partnership, technology and co-location has been proven. The Coast Guard will continue working to expand on these successes and export them to other ports nationwide.

WMD detection and response. The Coast Guard is an active partner and ardent supporter of the Department's Domestic Nuclear Detection Office for their work in identifying new technologies to enhance our seaborne radiation detection capabilities. Similarly, many of the capability enhancements included in the revised Deepwater implementation plan are designed specifically with this threat in mind. We know the trauma that infiltration of WMD could cause our nation, and intend to remain as vigilant as possible in preventing this from ever happening. Since 9/11, the Coast Guard has outfitted all of its boarding teams with personal radiation detectors, and we have in our inventory hand-held isotope detectors and other equipment that can be employed depending on the nature of the threat. We work closely with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Customs and Border Protection, and the Department of Energy to respond immediately to any indications of radiation encountered aboard a vessel at sea or in port. Of course, this is really a last line of defense.

As I mentioned in my introductory remarks, there is no single solution to maritime border security. It requires a layered system of capabilities, established competencies, clear authorities, and strong partnerships. The cost of allowing blind spots in our awareness, security regimes or operational capabilities is too high.

#### **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, we can and should be proud of the positive steps we've taken to enhance maritime security. I credit the innovation, resourcefulness and devoted service of Coast Guard men and women for much of our progress to date. They have made tremendous strides with assets and systems designed for a different era. I am convinced we can do even better as we deliver more capable and reliable operational assets and systems. If we give Coast Guard men and women the training and equipment to do the job, they won't let us down.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.